

WILLIAM HERSH
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New York Times clears ex-envoy's name

By Andrew Radolf

It was an "unusual story" by all accounts: A front page exoneration of a former United States Ambassador to Chile in the *New York Times* headlined, "New Evidence Backs Ex-Envoy on His Role in Chile."

The February 9 story was written by Seymour M. Hersh who left the Times in March 1979 to write a book on former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. Hersh won his Pulitzer for international reporting in 1970 for his stories on the My Lai Massacre. He also won several awards for his 1974 investigative series in the Times on domestic spying by the CIA and the Drew Pearson Prize in 1975 for his stories on CIA involvement in Chile.

Hersh, at the request of Edward M. Korrry, U.S. Ambassador to Chile from 1967 to 1971, told Times executive editor A.M. Rosenthal in November 1980 that he had uncovered new evidence while researching his book supporting the ex-envoy's claim that he never knew anything about covert CIA attempts to prevent Salvador Allende Gossens from being sworn in as that country's president.

Rosenthal responded to the news by assigning Hersh to write the story for the Times.

"This is a very unusual story," Rosenthal said. "In itself it's a story. It's not a correction. We ran stories some years ago. The writer came across some new information, so we ran that story."

The executive editor added he had asked Hersh when the latter informed him of the new evidence "not to put it in the book before you write it for us."

In the spring of 1973 Korrry had testified to the Senate Subcommittee on Multinational Corporations headed by Frank Church, former Senator from Idaho, that the covert plot against Allende in 1970, known as Track II, did not exist.

At the time, few believed Korrry was telling the truth.

On September 17, 1974, Hersh wrote in the Times that the subcommittee staff said it was recommending that Korrry, along with former CIA director Richard Helms and other Nixon officials, be charged with contempt of Congress for allegedly giving misleading testimony at the 1973 hearings.

Korrry's name was never submitted to the Justice Department, and the former ambassador was never charged with any

According to Korrry, after the story appeared in the Times, as well as other news media including the *Washington Post*, he became "a pariah" who was unable to work in either government or journalism, his first career.

Korrry had been U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia from 1963 to 1967 before assuming his post in Chile. He also had been United Press's chief European correspondent based in Paris in the early 1950's and had covered the beginnings of the United Nations at Lake Success, New York for UP. One of his fellow reporters at the U.N was A.M. Rosenthal, then a Times reporter.

Korrry said he and Rosenthal had been friends from 1946 until the news stories appeared in 1974 on his role in Chile.

The ex-envoy said Hersh's story on September 17, 1974 and two other stories by the Times reporter on September 8 and September 10, 1974 were some of the most harmful to his reputation.

Korrry said Hersh's February 9 story ends nearly seven years of frustration in trying to get himself heard by the major news media including the Times.

"The story reestablishes an integrity I was robbed of unjustly and unfairly seven years ago," Korrry told E&P. "It's the Times that has ended the nightmare that began seven years ago."

Korrry stated "an accurate reading of the record (of his 1973 testimony)" would show he had "inadvertently stopped it (Track II)" by continually acting against it "without knowing it existed."

"If he (Hersh) had called me and asked me," Korrry said, "he never could have written what he did."

Korrry contended Hersh for his September 17, 1974 story relied on information supplied by a source on the subcommittee instead of reading the record. The ex-envoy stated that Hersh in a recent conversation admitted to "only skimming" the record of Korrry's testimony.

E&P asked Hersh if he had made such an admission to Korrry. Hersh replied the allegation was "ludicrous. I let my record as a journalist speak for itself."

Korrry also contended that Hersh was aware by the end of 1976 that his stories in 1974 about the former Ambassador's role in Chile were inaccurate.

Hersh wrote in his February 9 Times story, and told E&P, that he had contacted Korrry in 1976 about doing another story to present Korrry's side of what happened in Chile but had concluded the former ambassador's account was "too self-serving to be credible."

But Korrry said Hersh never wrote a story in 1976 about his version of events in Chile because it would have been "ideologically displeasing" and dealt with CIA involvement in the country dating back to the Kennedy administration.

Korrry claimed that in 1976, Hersh had said to him, "I may resurrect you" if he agreed to provide the Times reporter with information on Henry Kissinger's involvement in covert CIA operations in Chile.

Korrry said he told Hersh he would only talk about "what I did and could swear to."

Hersh dismissed Korrry's claim of an offer "to resurrect him" and said he "did not want to dignify it with a denial."

Hersh did write a story for the Times on December 23, 1976 which mentioned Korrry near the end. Hersh wrote testimony Korrry had "volunteered in June (1976)" to Federal investigators looking into allegations of CIA/ITT wrongdoing in Chile was found by them to be "helpful."

In that same story, Hersh credited Joe Trento of the *Wilmington News-Journal* with writing the "first published reports of the active grand jury investigation in the CIA-Chile connection."

Trento's story appeared December 19, 1976 in the News-Journal. It was the second of many stories by Trento which began appearing November 28, 1976 and continued into 1978.

In his stories, Trento wrote at length about Korrry's account of events in Chile and said the former ambassador had been victimized by others in the government who were his political opponents.

"Sy Hersh had all the information of any consequence that appeared in his story on February 9, 1981 by December 19, 1976 when he had his hands on our second story dealing with what really happened in Chile," Trento said. "I didn't have any preconceived notion of Ed Korrry. I checked out what he had to say and it stood up. The readers of the *Wilmington News-Journal* knew the truth four years earlier than the people who read the Times."

Hersh told E&P, "I didn't trust Joe's articles as much as I should have. At one point, I felt one of his stories was very bad. The later stories were very good. I didn't think much of those stories because I was wrong (about Korrry in 1974)."